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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 CAPE TOWN 000189

SENSITIVE
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [SF](#)
SUBJECT: PARLIAMENT'S FIRST 100 DAYS-OFF TO A SLOW START

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1. (SBU) Parliament's first one hundred days (minus the three week recess) has been marked by new MPs finding their way around Parliament, both literally and figuratively, inefficiency and lack of clear guidance for the task at hand. Because over 60 percent of Parliamentarians are new, many MPs are unsure of not only the role that Parliament plays in the national arena, but are also uncertain as to their own role as Members of Parliament. The Parliamentary session began with each Ministry discussing their budgets and what they plan to do with their allocated funds over the upcoming year. Some budgets were passed with little debate, while others are still pending in committees while the opposition tries to make changes. Because the ANC holds a majority of the seats in Parliament with 264 MPs, all budgets will eventually be passed by the National Assembly and those Ministries that are asking for more such as Defense and Veterans Affairs will be re-visited in November during the medium term budget debate.

2. (SBU) When Poloff recently asked a Member of Parliament to brief a visiting Congressional delegation on the role of Parliament; the MP was unable to do so because she was new and did not really understand how Parliament works. Even many of the veteran MPs are confused as to their roles in Parliament since many of them are serving on new committees and do not have any experience in the group in which they are now serving. Chris Lancaster, who currently serves on the Defense Committee (previously served on Education), told Poloff, "I do not know anything about defense, I am still learning."

3. (SBU) Over the past several weeks, Poloff attended various committee meetings and the sessions are all the same: MPs are trying to figure out what the work of the committee is and the best way to carry out that work. During Poloffs attendance at several sessions of the International Relations and Cooperation Committee, the committee members have publically said they are not sure of their role and not sure of the way forward. There are only two current members who were on the committee previously and one is from the Inkatha Freedom Party, a small opposition party. O\$& QHVGabout what outsiders would be allowed to brief the committee, but no decision was made. Recently, former Deputy Foreign Minister Fatima Hajig and former chair of the committee, who is now a back-bencher, briefed the group on how she perceives the role of the committee and what she feels the committee must do. Comment. Most of the committee, even members of her own party (ANC) did not seem to heed her remarks. End comment. Note. It is unusual for a MP who is not part of a particular committee to attend the meeting and brief the committee. End note.

4. (SBU) The DA with 67 seats in Parliament is the official opposition in Parliament. Poloff spoke to Sandy Kaylan, a member of the DA Shadow Cabinet about the role the DA is playing in Parliament and about the role of the newly formed Shadow Cabinet. Kaylan said the Shadow Cabinet plays an oversight role, provides input to the DA Qthe Shadow Cabinet plays an oversight role, provides input to the DA caucus as to what is happening in their respective committees, and discuss the way forward for specific issues and portfolios. Their has only been one Shadow Cabinet meeting since the opening of the Fourth Democratic Parliament and at this point their discussions are being kept private with possible public disclosure in the future. Cost containment for communications vendors and their carrier customers can be achieved on two fronts. Click here to find out what they are and how to streamline the development and maintenance costs associated with building the product. Click Here to Learn How You Can Evaluate Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Applications Over the past decade, consumer debt has surged at an alarming pace. The likelihood of recovering debt, however, decreases with each passing day. Click here to learn how to maximize revenue. The DA has also taken a bold step and proposed to Parliament that Minister's and MP's air travel be restricted to economy class and that there be a reduction on the cost of Ministers vehicles and other benefits. In recent weeks the DA has reportedly been in talks with COPE, the United Democratic Movement, and the Independent Democrats to discuss their "re-alignment" under one party.

5. (SBU) The first one hundred days of Parliament have been

relatively quiet with MPs trying to find their footing. However, one major event is the investigation of Democratic Alliance (DA) Shadow Minister for Defense, David Maynier, by the ANC for releasing information about possible arms sales to other countries. On August 2, DA Shadow Minister for Defense, David Maynier hosted a press conference at Parliament where he released information regarding the arms trade in South Africa. Maynier alleged that the National Conventional Arms Control Committee (NCACC), made up entirely of ANC Ministers and Deputy Ministers, "is arming dictators all over the world." The NCACC is supposed to ensure a legitimate and effective process for controlling trade in conventional arms. If the weapons

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12. (SBU) When Poloff recently asked a Member of Parliament to brief a visiting Congressional delegation on the role of Parliament; the MP was unable to do so because she was new and did not really understand how Parliament works. Even many of the veteran MPs are confused as to their roles in Parliament since many of them are serving on new committees and do not have any experience in the group in which they are now serving. Chris Lancaster, who currently serves on the Defense Committee (previously served on Education), told Poloff, "I do not know anything about defense, I am still learning."

could be used to contribute to internal repression, violate human rights, violate fundamental freedoms, contribute to the escalation of regional conflicts or contribute to terrorism or crime, and then the weapons should not be exported. Maynier alleges that deals have either already been authorized with some countries, namely Libya, Syria, Venezuela and North Korea and pending with Iran and Zimbabwe.

Justice Minister Jeff Radebe who heads up the NCACC, denied that any weapons have been sold to these countries, but admitted that deals with some of these countries were under consideration. In response to Maynier's accusations, the ANC has asked the National Assembly to investigate whether Maynier contravened the National Conventional Arms Control Act. If Maynier is found to have violated the act, he could be criminally charged. The Chair of the Defense Committee, Mr. Nyami Booie told Poloff that the ANC has hired a lawyer to investigate this matter.

16. (SBU) Joan Fubbs, Committee Chair of Trade and Industry, told Poloff that the Parliamentary budget is much too low. Because President Zuma expanded the Cabinet, the committees in Parliament have also been expanded, but Parliament's budget is not sufficient to cover the increase in committees. Five committees in the National Assembly and two committees in the National Council of Provinces do not have any support staff and there is no money in the current Parliamentary budget to hire any until November when the mid term budget is revisited. On July 2, during the debate on the Parliamentary budget, Speaker Max Sisulu said that Parliament's budget is .18 percent of the national budget, which is lower than all national departments whose budgets range from 0.3 percent to 48.4 percent of the total national budget. Sisulu said, "Parliament is underfunded by 143 million rand." Qis underfunded by 143 million rand."

17. (SBU) The Congress of the People (COPE), a breakaway party of the ANC, has failed to live up to expectations. Instead of driving the debates about economic transformation and service delivery it has remained silent, its 30 National Assembly representatives are largely invisible. The COPE leadership is engaged in squabbles about who should be its leader rather than focusing on driving debates and agendas in Parliament. COPE's second deputy president and member of Parliament, Lynda Odendaal, and the party's election head, Simon Grindrod, have recently resigned from COPE, fueling speculation that the party is in trouble. Recently Mhazima Shilowa, COPE's deputy president, has hinted about pacts with other opposition parties, including the DA, to consolidate the opposition force in the 2011 municipal polls. COPE's future as an independent party at this time looks bleak. Comment. Whenever members of COPE address Parliament, ANC MPs always heckle them by screaming, "traitor" and not allowing them to speak. End comment.

18. (SBU) Comment. The Fourth Democratically elected Parliament seems to be off to a slow start. Portfolio committees were only finalized last week with several MPs being shifted to yet another committee. One MP who was previously serving on the Mining Committee for the past few months has now been taken off that committee and reassigned. Parliament's confusion and slowness to tackle the task at hand seems to be in contrast to Zuma's perceived successes during his first 100 days in office. End comment.